

Creating Your Program Summary

• LESS IS MORE •

Rarely has this saying been more true. Everyone is looking to avoid those moments when you want to print out a few records but you end up with fifteen pages. For the common good – as well as your own – please take this maxim to heart. Less really *is* more.

• CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE •

While foundations and the federal government certainly care about how your program is funded, what your vision statement is, how many people you serve each year, and how culturally competent your organization is, chances are that the focus of the counselors and families searching through a hundred records for an after-school program is very different. What they want is a brief, easy-to-read description of what happens in your program – exactly the same thing that you would want if you were seeking services.

- ✓ Try to include **information that doesn't appear elsewhere in the program record** – unless you think some information is important enough that it should appear in your record twice.
- ✓ There is a space for you to write a brief, 25-word description of your agency. Remember that the Program Summary is **NOT the place for an agency description**.
- ✓ **Target your summary** – and don't write anything that you wouldn't want to take the time to read.

• USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE •

Even though the database has a google translation tool, it is our responsibility to ensure that community members with varying levels of English proficiency can effectively navigate the database.

- ✓ **Here's a tip:** Microsoft Word can tell you how easy or hard it is to read your writing.
 - 1) Paste a copy of your program summary into a blank Microsoft Word document.
 - 2) Click on "Tools" then on "Options" at the bottom of the list.
 - 3) Click the "Spelling and Grammar" tab.
 - 4) Under the "Grammar" section, click the box next to "Show readability statistics." Click OK.
 - 5) The box will close. Go to "Tools" again and click on "Spelling and Grammar."
 - 6) It will check your document for spelling and grammar mistakes; and at the end, Word will show you a box with your document's readability statistics. The **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level** is the last statistic in the box. A good rule of thumb for easy readability, for all English levels, is to have that number be around 6.0 – or a **6th grade reading level**.
 - 7) If your score is much higher than 6.0, go back to your summary and **make long words shorter, break up your sentences, and use simple words where you used complex ones**.

• GET TO THE POINT •

Remember, you have only **75 words** to say what you want to say. So edit out unimportant details or information that's best left in your grant proposals. Think about what people most want to know about your program – and then give it to them. And use this opportunity to sell your program to the people reading about it. If they like what they see – and if they understand it – they're more likely to take advantage of the fantastic services you offer!

Choosing Your Service Categories

We know that it is hard to categorize your programs – especially when your programs do so many different things. We’re working on our end to make searching easier so that only the relevant programs come up at the end of a search. But we need all the programs to do their part too, by **only choosing the categories that describe your PRIMARY reasons for existence.**

Think about what your elevator speech is – your sixty-second answer for the question “Where do you work?”

- ✓ If your answer is “I work for a program that helps immigrant women find jobs and training” then your categories are: “Employment Services” and “Immigrant / Refugee and Linguistic Minority Services.”
- ✓ If your answer is “I do outreach to homeless populations,” then your categories are: “Outreach” and “Housing / Homelessness and Related Services.”
 - Even if you sometimes provide food, and sometimes call 911, and sometimes hand out books, you don’t have to check “Food / Nutrition” or “Emergency Services” or “Education & Literacy.” Helping refer your clients to other services, while important and worthwhile, does not mean that those services should count as your primary services.

Think about what would happen when your program comes up in a search. If someone would say “What is *that* program doing here?” then uncheck that service category and focus on the ones that really define your work.

Describing Your Target Population

It goes without saying that programs in Cambridge and Somerville are non-discriminatory. That means, for example, that you don’t have to say that you work with gay and lesbian populations if you are a senior center. The target population of a senior center is *senior citizens*: we know you would never turn away a gay senior, but that doesn’t make the LGBT population your target group.

You have ten words to describe your target population, and you can be as broad or specific as you’d like. Your response may be anything from:

“Children ages 5-18 living in Cambridge Public Housing” to
“Families who live in Somerville” to
“All are welcome.”

Just make sure that your target population section reflects the majority of the people who walk through your door everyday – and that you use ten words or less to say it.